A safe drinking water supply is an essential part of staying healthy. If you own a single family (domestic) well, the safety of your drinking water is YOUR responsibility.

WHAT ARE COLIFORMS?

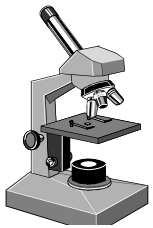
Coliforms are a group of bacteria found throughout our environment, including the feces of man and other warm-blooded animals. Therefore, coliforms are found in areas with possible fecal contamination. The presence of coliform bacteria in drinking water indicates that the water MAY be contaminated by disease-causing organisms.

WHY USE COLIFORMS TO INDICATE WATER QUALITY?

Drinking water must be free of disease-causing organisms called pathogens. Pathogens can be viruses, protozoa or bacteria. Waterborne pathogens cause diseases such as hepatitis, giardiasis, and dysentery. Testing water for specific viruses, protozoa and bacteria is very time consuming and expensive. In addition, not all water laboratories are equipped and approved to do the required testing. Therefore, testing water for specific organisms is limited to investigating waterborne disease outbreaks.

Coliform bacteria are used as water quality indicators because the analysis is relatively simple, economical and efficient.

The presence of coliforms in drinking water indicates **possible** contamination and potential health risk.



TESTING YOUR DRINKING WATER

The only way to know if your drinking water contains coliform bacteria is to have it tested at a laboratory such as the Benton-Franklin Health District's laboratory. Collection bottles, along with instructions, are available at any Benton-Franklin Health District office. Call for current fee information.

It is recommended that well water be tested for coliform bacteria at least once a year.

WHAT TO DO IF COLIFORMS ARE FOUND IN YOUR DRINKING WATER

Results from testing drinking water samples for coliforms are usually reported as SATISFACTORY or UNSATISFACTORY. If your drinking water sample tests unsatisfactory, it may be contaminated with disease-causing organisms and your well will need to be disinfected. For specific instructions on how to disinfect your well, contact the Benton-Franklin Health District's Environmental Health Division or our Laboratory.

If your water tests UNSATISFACTORY, it is important that you <u>do not drink the water</u> until it tests satisfactory. This includes not using the water for brushing of teeth. Take appropriate action until the problem is corrected. One option is to obtain bottled water on a temporary basis. Another option is to vigorously boil water for 3-5 minutes prior to being used for human consumption. If your drinking water is cloudy, bottled water may be the only solution.

If coliforms are not present in your drinking water (you receive a satisfactory report), it indicates that your well water was probably free of pathogens **at the time of the sample**. Be sure to have your water tested annually for bacteria; more often if you notice a change in taste, color or odor of the water, or if there are changes in the area around your well (such as a flood).

Protecting your well from potential contamination is important. It is recommended that your well:

• Be separated from sources of contamination such as surface drainage and barnyard runoff.

• Not be located within 100 feet of a septic system. Septic systems can fail and wastes may contaminate the well.

• Has a sanitary seal specifically designed for the top of the well casing. This seal must be correctly positioned, with all openings properly sealed to keep contaminants out of the well and ultimately out of the water source. For additional protection, the well head should extend 6 to 12 inches above the ground surface.

In addition, inspect surrounding areas within a 100-foot radius of the well for sources of pollution such as garbage, animal pens, barns and agricultural areas (this includes your home garden).

A Satisfactory water sample today does not guarantee the future quality of your drinking water. Test your well water <u>at least</u> once a year for bacteria. Test again after any construction and/or maintenance is performed on your water system.

For more information and/or assistance:

Benton-Franklin Health District
Environmental Health Division
800 W. Canal Drive
Kennewick, WA 99336
(509) 582-7761 Ext. 246

Samples bottles may be obtained at the following Benton-Franklin Health District lo99cations:

Kennewick office
Environmental Health
800 W. Canal Drive
Kennewick, WA 99336
(509) 582-7761 Ext. 246

Richland office
471 Williams St.
Richland, WA 99352
(509) 943-2614

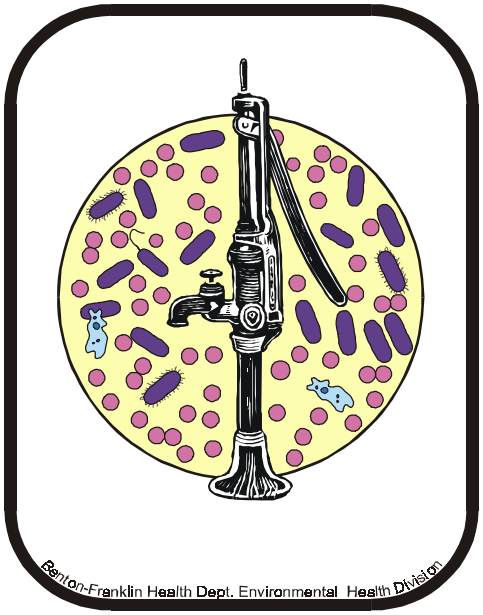
Pasco office
1218 N. Fourth
Pasco, WA 99301
(509)547-9737

Prosser office
310 7th Avenue
Prosser, WA 99350
(509)786-1633

BFHD-E-0055 (Rev 2/99)

The Single Family Well

Coliform Bacteria



PUBLIC HEALTH
Prevent • Promote • Protect
BENTON-FRANKLIN HEALTH DISTRICT